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1950



# OWARD ACIFISM

The convincement  
and commitment of  
a young European.

GUNNAR SUNDBERG

THE CHARLES G. REIGNER

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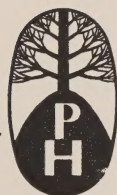


# Toward Pacifism

Gunnar Sundberg

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tory of mankind. My shock gradually grew into a strong concern. Could I not do something to stop that development? I knew many American Young Friends personally. I had a European approach to pacifism, and I knew the ethical motives for pacifism. With this background, perhaps I could give American Young Friends some additional points of view. Maybe I could strengthen them in their pacifism. At any rate, it has seemed worth trying.

GUNNAR SUNDBERG

# Toward Pacifism

I WAS BORN IN 1922, so I had not yet left school when the second world war started. My school was a co-educational boarding-school, which my father had founded. It is situated near Stockholm in Sweden. This was my home, and I enjoyed living there. In the years of political persecutions many boarding-schools in sheltered countries became real meeting-places for young people of various nationalities. That was unusually true of the Viggbyholm School, which gradually grew into something like an international center. Some of the teachers were particularly rich in initiative along these lines. In our class we were proud and happy about our contact with Mahatma Gandhi and our correspondence with the Hindu school which he had chosen for us. Some of us joined the International Friendship League, the chairman of which was one of our teachers. In the framework of that organization we received visits from foreign students, we played their games and taught them ours, we sang their songs and collected their stamps. We became interested in international understanding.

I knew that my father was a pacifist, and that he and three other teachers at the school had refused to submit to the military training that is required in Sweden. I thought this interesting, even remarkable, but I was by no means inclined to adopt the same course. I saw advantages and disadvantages in both alternatives, but the comparison I made seemed then to be in favor of national defense.

Now, this was natural in a way. Except for the state church, birthright membership in any specific organization



is not common in Sweden. People take plenty of time to form their own opinions. In my case, I knew nothing about the pacifist movement as such. Although my parents had joined the Society of Friends by the time I left school, still I myself did not know much about it. Religion was no concern of mine, and religious pacifism was far from me. Quakers and the few pacifists I knew seemed to be odd and unusual people, though I respected them for their firmness and consistency. Besides, I could see the link between their conviction and my own international outlook.

My father did not press the point. He did not argue or try to indoctrinate young people around him. He knew that faith and personal commitments such as pacifism must have time to grow from within. He never talked much, but one could sense that he lived his faith.

So, urged by military propaganda and public opinion, I did what the government asked me to do when I was twenty years of age. Two pictures from that time stand out in my memory. One day we were being trained to use the bayonet correctly. The officer took great pains to instruct us in detail how to twist the weapon slightly so as to cause as much damage as possible in the abdomen of the opponent. We tried to learn that particular kind of twist. The officer corrected us, stressing all the time how important that twist was, and describing the effect of it in the human body. I still remember that twist.

A few months later I had advanced enough to be entitled to lead a group of men in an attack on a small coast town. It was a manoeuvre, but we certainly did what we could to make it real. Not only did we enjoy, at four o'clock in the morning, the old ladies in their night gowns opening the windows, crying out to ask us if war had really come, but we actually blasted our dynamite at the railroad station, and in the fight that followed we certainly did fight. It was mainly wrestling, but I was simply carried



away and completely out of my mind. I had been hit above the eye, I was bleeding, but I did not notice it. People told me to stop and get out of it, but I did not hear them. Gradually, everybody else stopped, so I had to stop. The war was over, as far as we were concerned, and I was proud that I and a few others had actually been wounded. Only a few hours later I was amazed—amazed and horrified. “What on earth had been going on inside me? And for no particular reason. I did not hate those fellows. Nor in general did I like to do what the officers asked me to do. Why had my emotions been so frightfully stirred? What did I have inside me?”

I am still amazed and horrified. What a thin layer there is between man and beast! I believe there is, indeed, some kind of instinct, something quite out of the reach of our conscious personality, something dark and horrifying. That is how I have interpreted that strange experience, and that is why I feel that my present conscious pacifism may be weak, very weak, compared with the unconscious instincts.

## FROM BEWILDERMENT TO DETERMINATION

After my military service, but still during the war, I joined the Swedish work camp movement. It was clear to me that the Friendship League was no longer enough. On a war devastated continent a Friendship League has little to give. Collecting stamps while millions of homes are in ruins is no longer attractive. But the work camp movement struck a different note. If Sweden could remain out of war, what immense responsibility would be ours! The world would expect us to take upon ourselves a large part of the necessary post-war reconstruction. “After all,” the world would say, “the Swedes have had a good time, while we have been fighting for them and for the rest of mankind. If they don’t do anything after the war, we shall certainly

have no appreciation left for them at all." This challenge was efficient. Many young people trained themselves during the last war years to be able to work in Europe, as soon as the arms were laid down. Funds were raised, and for some years there was a strong movement for international relief. Now this has faded away—too soon. As far as I am concerned, the world is free to have a very low opinion of us.

The atomic bomb pushed me definitively over the pacifist border line. "Now, this is too much," I said to myself. And in 1946, the work camp in Finland opened my eyes to the brotherhood of pacifists in the cause of peace. That was a marvellous experience! It was as if a curtain had been lifted, revealing a whole new world. The sun had risen. The bud had burst into a huge flower. The world was full of human beings, just as seeking as myself and just as odd as the people I happened to know.

I met pacifists and peace workers from all over Europe, even from the United States. I got hold of books and pamphlets, I heard of organizations and movements, I listened to stories and reports, ideas and arguments. I realized how old and how manifold is the cause of peace. I got an inkling of the history of its various branches, and realized the related areas of human activities: internationalism, federalism, politics, economics, education, religion, ethics, humanism, race relations, social reforms, passive resistance.

I felt carried away on the wave of pacifism. The loyalty I felt to pacifists all over the world was incalculable. I used to say, over and over again, that I could never feel so close to non-pacifist Swedes as I would always feel to pacifist Hindus or Chinese.

Shortly after the war, I started in my mind a list of the various principles on which pacifism can be based. The first four seem to me to be on a different level from the others. They represent the common-sense level.

## Atomic warfare

Pronouncements by scientists began to appear shortly after the war insisting that a completely new era had begun. We must all change our minds and adapt our standards and practices to the new world which science had discovered. A nation's strength no longer lies in its army and its navy, but in decentralization, the absence of big cities. Yet we must realize how much is invested in the old kind of military system. If new standards are introduced, thousands of officers will lose their jobs. Factories and plants will have to close. People will lose their money. A hard struggle is ahead, the struggle to outlaw war in spite of the support it has and its substantial backers.

To the drafted young man, the atomic bomb meant a lot. In earlier wars, soldiers had gone out to meet the enemy and defend their country. The old romantic flavour of medieval knighthood still lingered. But the pilotless rockets, the guided missiles have done away with whatever was left of romantic and sentimental feelings. For the average soldier it has been like turning from the songs of an old Scottish bard to the noise of a cafeteria juke-box.

A sensible man does not try to fight icebergs with matches. A coast-guard may be extremely brave and dutiful, but he can do very little to stop a rocket. They explode before anybody has seen or heard them. Yet soldiers in the front-line may be comparatively well off, when we consider the fate of women and children in the big cities.

## Nobody considers himself aggressive

For centuries people have agreed that aggressive wars are to be rejected completely. To set up a conscripted army for an aggressive war has been next to impossible. But wars of defense are still praised. If we pacifists can prove to the

average soldier that he can never be sure whether his war is aggressive or defensive, he may think over his position again, and after that he may be less willing to jump to the conclusions his government expects him to adopt.

The element of defense is fading away. The only defense is attack. This is particularly true of atomic bombs. You can not stop them, you can only send them.

Our governments will not inform us about the character of our wars. Nor shall we be able to find out the truth for ourselves. Consequently, we had better make our own definite stand, once and forever.

## Diplomatic instability

But granted that we should agree to fight and to kill, and granted that we knew the reason for our fighting and our killing, and that this reason was the defense of our native country and our freedom, well then, in addition to that, we would like to see a sensible principle for the selection of our victims.

The pacts, alliances, and treaties all seem so arbitrary. How can we, if we disregard propaganda, see the point of fighting a country which was our ally and friend ten years ago? We can obey our governments, but we ought to realize that governments as well as individuals are dependent upon inconsistent turns of public opinion. It is a vicious circle. Governments and public opinion egg each other on, time and again, to define a fresh enemy.

This is where the Swedish policy of neutrality comes in. Our principle is: "Let us fight anybody who attacks us." One could wish that it were: "Let us fight nobody, even if someone should attack us." The latter alternative is extremely difficult for a government to stick to, even though it allows for non-violent resistance.

But this fighting of anybody is also a shaky position.



Shattering evidences have recently been dug out of the secret drawers of statesmen and diplomats. Throughout the last world war the Swedish iron was of considerable importance for the outcome of the war. We all knew that. But the following facts have now been released in an article in the periodical of the Swedish co-operative movement. Early in the year 1940, the British foreign office sent a note to the Swedish government, demanding that the export of iron ore to Germany be stopped. If we did not stop it, the British would take the necessary steps to have it stopped. The Swedish government took no action. During the first days of April, the British started mining the waters west of Norway. That also was known to the public. But few people seem to have been aware that, on the eighth of April, British troops embarked on their ships on the east coast of England. On the ninth of April, the Germans struck in Norway and Denmark. Additional circumstantial evidence supports a complete re-interpretation of this history of ten years ago. Much of what we thought was German propaganda turned out to be actually true. This is a different picture, less light on the British hero, less dark in the German dragon. We might even picture the two as lions, leaping for the same piece of juicy flesh. Between them the time margin was one day.

The majority of the Swedes felt that they belonged to the Western allies. They would have hated to fight alongside the Germans. But things like that do happen, as Finland's fate at that time proved. But if we had given up our principle, we might have welcomed the British and helped them to fight the Germans on the whole Scandinavian peninsula. That might have been the better course, but the platform of neutrality would have been lost. We would have been fumbling about in mist and darkness again. Like other small nations we would then have been used as tools by the great powers. The one-day margin kept

our eyes shut to the fact that neutrality plus ideological sympathy may be just as inconsistent as pacifism plus ideological sympathy.

To act according to the moves of someone else is not the way to build peace. That is what the United States is being criticized for just now, as regards its reactions to Moscow. The pacifists have realized this and it is one of the reasons why they make a definite stand and refuse to be tossed about by arbitrary public opinion and helpless governments.

## **The nation-state**

How artificial and arbitrary are borderlines, and what huge amounts of emotion and sentiment are invested on either side! Wars have always been far more easily started when the leaders have had a nation-state sentiment to build on. Your community, your native town, the countryside where your home is, for these it is natural to feel a strong affection. But the next natural unit is the whole world. Everything between is more or less fictitious.

Nationalist feelings have grown stronger, in spite of better communications, increased travel, more widespread knowledge of foreign languages, progress in film and radio. Is not this the inexplicable anachronism of our time?

Economic factors also play their part. Protectionism, economic planning within the country, quota systems, and currency control often become vehicles for disrupted nationalism. But a nation's economy should not mould the minds of its people. The very reverse should be true.

What we can all do, whether we be pacifists, would-be pacifists, or just well-balanced human beings, is to insist over and over again that our fellow citizens are not so enormously better than our neighbors across the border. However great the differences, the similarities are greater.

## From humanistic to Christian pacifism

I love to go back, in my memory, to my first international work camp, at Hirvasvaara in 1946. It meant so much to me. The searching and penetrating attitude of our souls, which grew in proportion to our friendship, helped to develop my religious faith. My own belief, confronted with so many other beliefs, had to be made clear and articulate. I learned where I stood and what I felt about religion. A challenge like that had not come to me earlier.

In the Nordic summer nights I walked out under the dark blue sky and thought of the new world I had discovered, the world of idealistic commitment. I saw my own course now, my new direction, my goal. And my religion seemed to allow for a prayer, thought or whispered, somewhat like this: "Yes, I do think there is some kind of Great Power, and if I am right in this, I am sure this Great Power will approve the new course I am taking, the new goal I am headed for. I think I have energy to work my own way through, but if You want to help me, God, that would be wonderful. Let us co-operate, if that appears right with You."

I realized that my pacifism was essentially humanistic. It was rationalistic and founded on ethical principles and international sympathy. In Hamburg, in a panel discussion of pacifism, I refused to follow the arrangement of the chairman who meant me to take the Christian standpoint in the contribution I was expected to give. However, this was not, at least not consciously, my approach at that time.

A year or so after that incident, I stopped resisting the explicitly Christian convictions that had all the while been growing within me. "Of course that is where you belong," I said to myself, "and you fool yourself if you reject Christianity, just because you feel such a strong loyalty to peace-workers of other religions. You may not like the Christian

churches and their dogmas, but Christianity as such, you should no longer hesitate to accept." So, having belonged to the ethical War Resisters' International, I now joined the Swedish branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Christian pacifist organization. I had belonged to the Swedish Lutheran church all the time, but practically without noticing it. I had travelled from the International Friendship League, to the International Work Camp Movement, to the ethical pacifist organization, and around again to Christian pacifism. However, I am sure there are still other levels to reach. I picture pacifism as a pyramid with a wide base. In my climbing toward the top, I have perhaps taken four steps now. The pyramid becomes narrower as it rises, the commitments more sharp and more exclusive.

We are now leaving the common-sense level and climbing to a level requiring a certain degree of idealism and willingness to follow. Politicians, diplomats, and common-sense people will probably remain behind. The new scenery is not even yet religious but I am glad to have a chance to trace this transition. I hope it will encourage young people who have a Christian faith, but are somehow in doubt whether pacifism should be part of it. Even in a religious pacifist group, such as the Society of Friends, it may be that a more powerful ethical support of pacifism would be appropriate.

## **Accepting society as it is—or trying to renew it**

Just now I see this problem most clearly in education. Is our goal to educate good citizens for democracy as it exists at the present time? Should our students fit into society as smoothly as possible? Or is there a better kind of democracy, an ideal Utopia, for which we ought to train them? In that case society would have to conform to them, when they have grown up. Not they to it.

Pacifism belongs to the progressing side. It is alien to



society, as society looks today. But so is, or has been, the painting of Picasso, the music of Debussy, the education of Pestalozzi, the religion of Luther, the universe of Copernicus, and the statesmanship of Gandhi. To look ahead, and to get one's bearings in relation to the future, in relation to a better world, may seem unrealistic and naïve. But it is this effort that lies behind progress.

It must be admitted that people who refuse to accept their contemporary society are not always successful reformers. More often they are outwardly unhappy members of despised minorities. Even so, they may play an important role, functioning as the bad conscience of an imperfect order. This argument is more revolutionary and more visionary than any other with which I have come in contact. It seems to me to be the incarnation of idealism.

## **To kill the evil-doer is not to kill the evil**

It has often been asserted that no wars can be conducted unless the individual soldiers are convinced that their cause is just. Attitudes were different when the famous Swiss lancers offered to fight for any king, if only he paid them well. But with conscripted armies and mechanized equipment it is certainly hard to lead men to a confessedly unjust war. But every war can be made out to be a just war. It is even possible to make every war, a war of self-defense. Every soldier can then be convinced that he fights evil. His instincts work subconsciously. But in his conscious mind he is always certain that he is fighting a just war, a war against incarnate evil.

Often he may be right. But evil is not done away with by a bullet or a bayonet sting, not even by an atomic explosion. Evil-doers may be killed in masses, but evil will remain alive. Evil may remain quiet for a time, or it may thrive and prosper. Evil may infect the victors in the

moment of their victory. It may spread and be carried on by other evil-doers. After some years another crop of evil-doers have to be killed off. But evil itself remains.

Evil cannot be extinguished by wars. It will come up again like mushrooms. The remedy must be to overcome evil by good. To love our enemies.

The pacifist must also reject the death penalty in law. In the electric chair man can kill the evil-doer, but not the evil.

## **Double standards**

For a person who has devoted himself to peace, education for internationalism and the creation of one world become part of his personality, a vocation, a destiny. He can really do something to make peace stronger and more lasting. But if war comes, what then? He will be called on to defend country and freedom. Will he do it? And if he does, what effect will this have on his earlier work and on his whole personality? If he accepts war, he must modify his ideals. His aims must change into something different. The double standards will split his inner consistency and disrupt his calm.

A good life must be a consistent life, with one set of standards, not two. Since I have devoted my life to peace and international education, I am going to stick to that decision. If I am allowed and encouraged to work in that general direction for ten years, I cannot permit myself to be turned right around at the end of that period and obey a command to work in the opposite direction.

## **Human brotherhood**

Pacifism, I presume, must remain emotional to some extent. It cannot be a matter of the intellect alone. Feeling,

intuition, faith, all play their role. The unconditional acceptance of human brotherhood is an important element. A person, to whom citizens of other lands are just so many statistical digits, so many mouths to fill, so many competitors to fear, so many odd creatures to look at from hotel windows, so many poor souls who argue and quarrel in spite of their obvious need to be saved in some way or other by oneself, has a long way to go before he is ready to become a pacifist. When these prejudices have been done away, then a human being is just ready to begin to be a pacifist.

Some time ago I met a teacher who had been working with UNESCO for several years. He had been in all the European countries, not as a tourist, but as a professional educator with the goal of international understanding constantly before him. It was revealing to hear his comments. All that was in the papers and all that people argued and got upset about, just did not fit the basic concept of human brotherhood. True internationalism and the average public opinion of our days seem to operate on different wavelengths. Public opinion fails to grasp what lies behind internationalism. Persons who have become world citizens in the deepest sense of the word have a different light on contemporary history in which prejudices, pretended moral superiority, and short-range selfishness appear to be corner stones of society.

Acquiring the real international outlook is, to a large extent, a matter of education. Far-off human beings are promoted in the mind from statistical figures to likeable brothers, or at least to next-door neighbours. This is a matter of experience. Here come in International Friendship Leagues, Student Services, and Work Camp Movements. To them belongs the extremely important responsibility of kindling and strengthening the feeling of human brotherhood all over the world. This strengthening is an absolute

necessity, whether or not the majority of mankind become confessedly pacifist.

Though experience and feeling are the basic elements of brotherhood, loyalty brings it one step further. Loyalty draws the motivation toward peace closer to religion than does any non-religious motivation. Certainly, faith in human brotherhood and loyalty to mankind touch the essentials of religion, and grow into an all-compelling conviction. Killing just one human being would break that loyalty. It would betray one's deepest faith.

## Responsibility to posterity

Life is not to be considered just as it is now. It has a long, almost endless history. As we try to pierce the clouds behind us, we discern two stages important in the problem of war and peace. There is a time when people kill each other because they are hungry. Now they kill one another—well, why?

But life has not only a history. It has also a future, and a future that may turn out to be horribly bad, or unbelievably good. Life is a succession of moments, not only within the span of one human life, but starting ages back and reaching ahead into a hazy future. The ideal of peace must be estimated in reference to that long-range kind of life.

Democracy must be made safe for posterity. That was one of the slogans of the last war. It still lingers in the air, forming one element of the cold-war propaganda. That slogan is true. We must be happy that the fighters do not take an inferior watchword on which to base their policies. The ideal of not killing must also be made safe for posterity. I could visualize a time when pacifism would be dead, as the Latin language is dead. We might read about it in our high school history books, and sigh with relief realizing that people are no longer so naïve as to think



that men can live together without killing one another now and then. Pacifism would then have gone to the end of its way out.

A succession of wars, following closely upon each other, may lead to either of two reactions. "Well, there you are. Human nature is incurably bad. Have not all these wars proved it? Original sin is in every man, and the sooner we realize it, the better. The reformers of our days are pitiable. Let us retire to the new orthodoxy, embrace the existentialist philosophy, look detachedly on the absurd history of mankind, and calmly await annihilation."

The other conviction, caused by too many wars in too close succession would be: "Well, there you are. This business of trying to solve our problems by means of war is just no good. War has never led to anything really good. One war just leads to another. Obviously, the set of values that we build our wars on is radically and exclusively wrong. Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, that is the underlying principle of war. And, as you see, it has not been successful. It has certainly had quite a number of centuries to be tested in. It seems to me that the time has come when the opposite set of values should have a chance to be tried. To overcome evil by good. Well, that principle certainly could not lead to any worse results than the jungle principle has led to."

And even if it is too early, even if the jungle principle has to be tried for another thousand years before people realize how utterly wrong it is, even then it is necessary to keep the opposite principle alive. If we carry it on to posterity only as dead stuff in history books, it can never come to life again. Then people will have a right to believe that the jungle principle is the only one, the only alternative we have. No, the pacifist principle must be carried on in the hearts of some living and breathing human beings, not just in history books. Even if ninety-nine per cent of

mankind want to try the jungle principle for another thousand years, the remaining one per cent must carry the opposite principle in their hearts and hand it on from generation to generation, in a patient and everlasting succession of commitments.

In reconsidering my own position, I feel a great happiness in belonging to that one per cent. We have a mission. We have committed ourselves. Not only we who live now. But all who have lived and have made the commitment, and all who shall live and shall make the commitment. We have a responsibility to posterity.

## **That of God in every man**

Many books have been written about religious pacifism. Scholarly inquiries have been made into the Gospels to find out what Jesus thought of pacifism and war resistance. Conference delegates have tried to determine the position of the church as regards war and peace. There is an abundance of theological argument for and against pacifism. But in the end these definitions and statements merge into the undefinable mystery of faith.

The Quaker doctrine of "that of God in every man" is generally considered to be the basis for the pacifism of the Society of Friends. That idea, the immanence of God in the world, the "inner light" in every human soul, gives a specific emphasis to Christianity, as interpreted by George Fox, his friends, and their followers. The universality of Quakerism seems to me to be more marked than that of most other denominations. "That of God in every man" makes for a world-wide community. To many young people, I am sure, the step between the idealistic concept of human brotherhood and the religious doctrine of "that of God in every man" must seem fairly easy to take. That was certainly true in my own development: here I found a solid

bridge between the two worlds. As soon as I had a clear picture of God as the supreme power to be revered and worshipped, that picture mingled with my earlier international feeling, and so my pacifism became identified with the doctrine of "that of God in every man." The Quaker tolerance which I was happy to experience at my first international work camp, seems to be a result of that same doctrine. And again, the freedom to believe that we are all brothers, sons of the same Father, in spite of our different backgrounds and our different ways of formulating our beliefs, such freedom must be a great asset to those who want to take the step from ethical idealism to religious faith.

## Accepting the Cross

But acceptance of the Cross is, to me, a Christian approach of a completely different coloring. Taking this kind of religious pacifism in its extreme form, it may appear to be more authoritarian, founded as it is on experience conveyed to us by the Gospels. If we interpret the Gospels literally and if we cannot help seeing a definite proclamation of pacifism and non-violence in the words of Jesus, a corresponding kind of faith seems natural and, in fact, unavoidable.

But a pacifism founded exclusively on the authority of what is recorded in the Bible accepts certain limitations. Above all, it has to accept the fact that only in certain parts of the world is the Bible the supreme source of authority. There are also other living religions. For this reason a Bible-centered pacifism tends to have less universality than some other pacifist convictions. Moreover, submission to the authority of the Bible is often combined with the feeling that pacifism is hopeless as an earthly ideal. This combination of authority and hopelessness seems to explain the idea, in the individual pacifist, that he has ac-

cepted a Cross. Obviously, the tremendous strength of this attitude lies in the fact that Christ himself, under similar conditions, accepted his Cross. The authority of the will of God and an outward hopelessness were certainly two important factors at the time of his crucifixion.

Having come in contact with some pacifists in whom the acceptance of the Cross seems to be the sole basis for their pacifist stand, I wish to make one further comment. That kind of conviction may lead to a relationship such as this: Man—Bible—God, instead of the relationship Man—Mankind—God. Such pacifists may be too much concerned about their own particular relationship to God, rather than the brotherhood relationship among men. Here the individuals are small transmissive elements in a greater entity. The Bible-centered pacifists accept the Cross, and they accept the Cross joyfully, in spite of all its earthly hopelessness, for they feel a certain assurance that they will be richly rewarded, possibly outside of this life.

Whether the last statement is exaggerated or not, it seems fair to say that a pacifist conviction, based on "that of God in every man," is more securely anchored in human brotherhood, and so tends to be more socially and more internationally concerned, more universal and more tolerant, than that which is based on Biblical authority. To me it is beyond discussion that pacifism means to make peace, that is, to take away the causes of war. Imperfect human relations are the causes of any war, so pacifism must be an instrument for the benefit of every human being, a means of improving human relations all over the world. It should never be a tool for one's own salvation. This is a warning rather than a criticism, a warning against a sort of pacifist isolationism.

I am aware that such a warning is not always necessary. I have, for instance, a very good friend in Finland, a pastor. He has turned to pacifism because of his acceptance of the



Cross. Exclusively for that reason, he has repeatedly declared. But nevertheless, he led an international seminar last summer in a spirit that was quite as much concerned, I think, about the brotherhood of man as the best Quaker seminar. So the basis of one's pacifism does not necessarily determine the degree of its universality, nor one's own loyalty to mankind.

Finally, I wish to point to the fact that people often contrast ethical pacifism with religious pacifism, whether the latter is based on "that of God in every man" or on the acceptance of the Cross. Personally, I am inclined to believe that in situations of intense propaganda, or of torture, where your convictions are tested to the utmost, a religious loyalty might be of greater support to you than a human loyalty. A number of people I have known disagree on this point. They have told me of the experiences of their friends, who have been able to endure frightful sufferings for the sake of their convictions without believing in God. So I am not sure about this, and somehow the question has lost its importance to me. I feel I have two kinds of foundation for my pacifism. One human, and one religious.

## FROM ONE-TIME COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS INVOLVEMENT

In a dream I saw a map of Asia. My position, as a spectator, was somewhere over Arabia, and I saw the Himalaya as a huge fortress. A war was going on. American soldiers were attacking the fortress from the plains of India. Russian soldiers were defending it. I was a spectator. But the scene changed slightly. On the top of the Himalaya there appeared a huge rock, balanced on the highest peak. The rock had the shape and color of a great stone which I had been trying to pull and push up to our house, in order to

use it as a doorstep. Russian soldiers were trying to push the rock down on the plains of India. American soldiers were holding it back with all their might. It was all in the midst of a war, a fierce and horrible battle. Bodies were torn apart by stones and bayonets. Dying human beings were screaming. On a solid piece of board, fixed between the rock and two of the mountain peaks, and stretching out over the plains of India, a war correspondent was standing. In a loud voice he reported everything that happened around, and under, and on top of the rock. But I, too, saw everything. My heart seemed to be with the Americans, but I was only a spectator. Standing securely in the air somewhere over Arabia, I just watched.

It has long been clear to me that pacifism must beware of isolationism. I know that it is wrong to sit back and just watch, detachedly, maybe superciliously. In a theoretical way I have taken some trouble to see that my view of life should include a combination of pacifism and engagement in world affairs. Until recently, and in fact, even in preparing this paper, I thought I had a pretty clear picture of this combination, and I stated it in this way:

"Should pacifism take all one's energy?" This is an important question. My answer is *no*. One should not specialize in pacifism. Well, some people should. Some people should approach it from the scientific angle. Others should approach it from the angle of the secretariat. But most people should just make the commitment, and then turn again to their individual, normal activities. If all pacifists were *only* pacifists, the whole movement would soon become impossible.

What is important, however, is that one's normal activity, one's job, should be as well integrated with the positive and constructive elements of one's pacifism as is possible. Preferably one should try to choose a profession in which one can work for the constructive side of one's paci-

fism and at the same time earn one's living. That is why I am happy to be a teacher.

Lately, however, I have encountered the argument that a person's one-time commitment followed by a life-time of normal activity is no longer sufficient. In the course on pacifism which we had at Pendle Hill, two British Quakers strongly emphasized that new view of pacifism. They had come over from England to co-operate with American Friends in an attempt to find ways to relieve the tension between East and West. The concrete prevention of an impending war seemed to weigh much more heavily on their minds than the abstract rejection of wars in general. I could not help agreeing with them, when they stated that the system of total warfare called for a fundamental change in pacifist policy. In earlier days, a withdrawal from the ranks of the armed forces was a good testimony against war, and might have diminished the chances for military leaders to organize international wars. But that is no longer the case. No withdrawal is of real effect, as we face total war. Even if ninety nine per cent of the armed forces in every country were withdrawn, a present-day "push-button" war could easily do many times as much damage as the last world war.

Commitment, normal life, and withdrawal from military affairs are insufficient requirements of the individual pacifist. What we need today is involvement, continuous involvement, on the highest level. Peace workers are generally reluctant to go into politics. They feel they "dirty their hands" in the game of politics. Too often they have to compromise their high ideals. And so they prefer to withdraw. But that should no longer be so. The threat of a total war compels the pacifist to take that risk, to take the idealistic risk of continuous involvement on the highest level, the only level where total wars can be prevented. This, of course, is much more difficult. Not only does it

require much more of the individual pacifist in the way of knowledge, self-reliance, persuasiveness, etc., but it also leads to situations where his hands may actually get *dirty*.

## **What would you do, if somebody broke into your house to kill your family?**

That is the question that must have met the convinced pacifist at least a hundred times during the course of his first pacifist year.

Before I joined the pacifists I wanted to be very sure that it was right to join without having a complete command of one's instincts. I came to the conviction that it was, and I was told, that it is all right to join, that nobody gets an absolute command of his primitive instincts. If we should wait for that, we would have no pacifists at all. Besides, there is a great difference between not being able to control one's instincts and marching towards the front line, voluntarily, with one's will power under perfect control.

Furthermore, it is misleading to concentrate too much on that ultimate choice, the killing or not killing of the would-be murderer on your doorstep. Life has actually more to do with those factors which make such an ultimate choice impossible—or possible. George Fox said that one should live in a spirit that takes away the occasion of war. This is a more constructive and positive attitude, and the ultimate choice should come in only secondarily, as a necessary addition to the right constructive spirit. Some time ago I heard a paper on Kierkegaard's religion. It was pointed out that in the lives of men there are undoubtedly choices, in which both alternatives are utterly tragic, and where the individual is reduced to an "incurable sufferer." That may well come up in the case of pacifism, but it need not necessarily come up, and life as a whole will not consist exclusively of such hopeless situations. We should con-



centrate on the positive side and not be paralyzed by such "existentially" unsolvable choices.

## **How much should we refuse to do because of our pacifist convictions?**

There are many different answers to this question: not pay taxes, not register, not work in factories for war material, not use any violence at all, and so on. It is difficult to find the right border-line of the concept of pacifism in this respect. My brother is now at the age of military service, and he holds that it is impossible to do anything at all in our days without helping the war machinery. But at the same time one must live; then how reconcile those two viewpoints? For my part I have found the most clear-cut distinction in this: "I will not kill." This is a general statement, but it is the only general statement I can make.

From the refusal literally to kill, one consequence follows. André Trocmé from the French Fellowship of Reconciliation visited us in Hamburg and told us this story: He did his military service in North Africa. He had decided never to kill anybody. He took part in an expedition in an area where rebellious Arabs were attacking people. He had left his gun behind, but at first nobody knew it. Eventually his comrades discovered that fact, and the officer in charge of the expedition told Trocmé that, if they were attacked and he as a member of the expedition lacked means to defend the group, in all probability nothing could save him from being sentenced to death by court martial. For—and this is the important point—his fellow soldiers and his superiors relied upon him to do what they expected him to do. If they had known of his unusual decision, they would have taken some one else on that expedition. As it turned out, they were not attacked. André Trocmé was sentenced only to imprisonment.

This illustrates why it is necessary for a pacifist to take a second step, in addition to his decision not to kill. He must tell people that he has made that decision. It is likely that he will then be ordered to perform some alternative service. That is all right. Or he may have to go to prison, and that is all right, too. It is in accord with his commitment, although not perhaps a very constructive alternative. But just to go ahead without saying anything, in order, perhaps, not to avoid the dangers which press upon others, is not good. It may lead to a betrayal of one's own countrymen, and that, after all, is also contrary to the principle of human brotherhood.

It is possible to take other steps in the direction of non-co-operation. Refusing to register seems to me to be more a testimony against the power of the government than a testimony against the evil of killing other human beings. A socialist does not easily take that step. It would involve him in complications, in which his pacifism and his socialism might contradict each other. Refusing to register is probably more natural to Americans with their devotion to individualism. I know there are other reasons, for the fact that many young men in America refuse to register. But from a European standpoint it often seems puzzling. In Europe pacifists are trying to make conscientious objection lawful. In the United States it is lawful, but even that does not satisfy. As has been pointed out to me, such an attitude may make European governments less willing to grant pacifists their right to conscientious objection.

## **How can one be a pacifist and yet not sanction evil in some form or other?**

This question sounds very simple at first glance: "Pacifism itself is the extreme opposite to evil." But when we examine the matter more closely, it appears to be a basic

problem. If I say about the enemy intruder who breaks into my house that I will try to stop him with friendliness, is not that a kind of co-operation with evil, or acceptance of evil? After all, he is wrong, and I am right. The underground heroes of Norway from the last war would hold strongly to that. The problem becomes even more difficult when it is carried over from the individual to nations. The following conflict has been a real nightmare to me for some years. I still see no solution, and that is the main reason why I have partly abandoned my reliance upon my own judgment and my own energy, and have laid my unsolvable problems in the hands of God.

During my stay in Germany, over and over again I heard this argument from young Germans: "You criticize us for not having revolted against Hitler and not having put an end to that inhuman state of things. And of course, we should have done it, but what about you? You had the free press, and you knew what happened in Germany. You could have objected. We saw what you did. We saw the Olympic games in 1936 with all the countries accepting Nazi Germany. We saw your diplomats still in Berlin. We saw your products being exported to our country, just as if nothing had happened. How could we revolt against Hitler, when you all sat back and did nothing?"

This soaked into my mind and filled it to the brim. But then, back in Sweden, on a beautiful summer day, I was reading in a paper about the Russian slave labor camps. Then it struck me like lightning: "What do the Russian people think? How can the arguments of the young Germans be applied to the young people of Russia?" And I felt that, in order to demonstrate to the Russian people that we do not accept slave labor and the like, we must do just everything. Not declare war, but risk war. We must stop trade, we must break diplomatic relations, we must spread a radio-propaganda of rejection and non-co-operation. We

must in every way show the Russian people what we feel, so that eventually they can act with our opinion as a standard of righteousness. That is the least, perhaps the only thing we can do, to show our responsibility for everything that happens in the world and to show our loyalty to every section of mankind.

But at the same time, with the agony of the conflict in a Greek drama, there came to me the atmosphere of pacifism. Not the principle of not killing, but the atmosphere of love and constant friendliness. I felt so keenly that the attitude of non-co-operation and rejection seemed right from the ethical standpoint, but it seemed utterly contradictory to the principle of everlasting friendliness. Logically, I still do not see the way out of that dilemma.

When, in the beginning, I emphasized the involvement in world affairs as the only answer to the threat of total war, I realized, of course, that such an attitude of involvement would make this ethical dilemma appear even more complex. To a person who has made the pacifist commitment, but has then withdrawn from everything except his personal life and the loyalty to his commitment, this problem may seem fairly easy to pass by. A pacifist isolationist may have little difficulty in remaining faithful to his ideals, except that he can do little to prevent war. But the more a person is willing and eager to involve himself in world affairs with the intention of preventing a war, the more unsolvable will he find the conflict between non-co-operation on an ethical level and co-operation on a basis of love.

It helps a little to go back from the nation to the individual. We no longer hate a criminal. We hate his action. And from the teacher's standpoint, we love our children, but we strongly dislike their actions when they steal or lie or cheat. But however clear that may be in theoretical terms, it is very hard in practice, even when only one or two individuals are concerned. And it is simply horrifying



when it comes to nations, and the very existence of mankind is at stake. Every time it appears on the international level, it seems to me to be a superhuman task to find the right solution to this problem. Reliance upon the providence and constant care of God is to me the best source of consolation, confidence, and strength. But it also helps to see a dilemma like this in the light of history and of posterity. So, in conclusion, I should like to come back to the strongest motive for my pacifism and show it to you in the form of an old legend. Is it not true that an ideal picture, a symbol, a vision, gives added strength to one's conviction? However hopeless the conflicts of our time may appear, we can still hope for a better future, a time that may bring happiness to people in generations yet to come. To me, as a pacifist, it seems to be more important than anything else that our descendants shall see pacifism alive, that kind of pacifism that lies in the core of all religions. Our responsibility to posterity is the patient carrying-over of the faint, flickering ideal of peace making.

In the Middle Ages a sinful man had travelled to Jerusalem in order to get forgiveness for his sins. What he had to do was to go to the holy flame of fire in the temple, light a torch at that fire, and then travel all the way back to his native town with that fire still burning. If he could do that, he would win forgiveness. So he started out. He had many torches, he had plenty of food, he had good warm clothing, he had a beautiful horse, and everything seemed complete. But soon the wind began to blow and the rain to fall. He had to concentrate completely on sheltering his flame. Thieves came and took his food. Robbers took his warm coat and his beautiful horse. They gave him an old donkey instead of his horse. But by now he did not mind. All his attention was directed to the flame. He travelled for days and days. During the nights he made big fires out of his flame, so that it would be sure to be

burning when he awoke from sleep. But often he did not sleep at all. He was cold. He was hungry. People sometimes pitied him and gave him a piece of bread. There was nothing for robbers to take from him. In fact, they thought he was out of his mind, as he stumbled along, always sheltering the little flame he carried. But he did not mind. The flame had become so dear to him. It was his only friend, the only thing he had ever had that really meant something to him. He cherished it. He watched over it. And he stumbled along. In the legend, the poor man safely reached his native town. The flame still burned.

How shall we succeed? How will mankind succeed?

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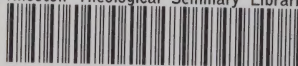
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